

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on Protecting the Internet and Consumers Through Congressional Action
January 21, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This week's hearing is an important opportunity to discuss bipartisan reforms to strengthen and improve the Medicare program while helping achieve the savings needed to pay for a permanent solution to the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate. Last Congress this committee, along with our colleagues at the Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee, came to an agreement on policy to finally remove the uncertainty that has plagued seniors and their doctors for too long. Still to be resolved was a path to pay for this important policy.

The experts here this week will help us explore some bipartisan proposals to both strengthen the Medicare program as a whole while also finally removing the threat of the SGR permanently.

This is an historic opportunity. Securing a permanent solution to the SGR is more than tinkering with how we pay doctors who treat Medicare patients. This can also be Medicare reform.

And while it is important to pay for this policy, I want to caution us about framing our discussions as one of merely budgets or beneficiaries. The truth is, Medicare's budget is out of control and the program is on the fast track to insolvency. That threatens the long-term access to care for millions of seniors who depend on the program. So the most pro-beneficiary reforms we can adopt this Congress are ones that will not only remove the threat of the SGR, but also shore up the Medicare program with sensible reforms that make the program more sustainable for years to come.

Failure to pass a permanent SGR solution before March would not be due to a lack of policy options, but a failure of Congress to work together on offsets with the same bipartisan spirit we exhibited on the policy. This subcommittee has proven it is capable of working together, and I think we're ready to do it again.

I am committed to working with my colleagues on the committee, in the House and in the Senate finally get this done. There is a path forward, and it involves targeted reforms which save money without cutting care; it involves a balance of pay-fors which are bipartisan policies; and it involves a spirit of cooperation with sustained commitment. Seniors in Michigan and across the country deserve the peace of mind that their trusted doctor will be able to answer their calls for care.

The time is now. So let us begin.

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